United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council this evening decides that "all States in which there are funds of the Government of Iraq...shall cause the transfer of these funds, as soon as possible to the escrow account" provided for in previous resolutions; requests the Secretary-General to transfer to the Compensation Fund a percentage of those funds and to use the remainder for the costs of United Nations activities concerning Iraq.

+ Two rounds of intensive technical discussions between United Nations and Iraq conclude at Headquarters; topics discussed were humanitarian programme for northern Iraq, extension of Memorandum of Understanding.

+ General Assembly continues debate hearing statements by Prime Ministers of Lesotho and Rwanda; by the Foreign Ministers of Tunisia, Lebanon, Cape Verde, Viet Nam, Tanzania; yesterday afternoon Uruguay and Burkina Faso addressed Assembly.

+ Latvia asks United Nations to dispatch fact-finding mission of human rights experts to that country to examine situation there.

+ Pakistan asks for inclusion of additional item on agenda of General Assembly's current session, entitled "Emergency assistance to Pakistan".

+ General Assembly's Legal Committee adopts six-power draft text urging States to take all measures to ensure compliance with existing international law on protection of environment in times of armed conflicts.

+ United Nations Environment Programme sends team to Somalia to investigate reports of possible hazardous waste dumping in that country and to ensure that planned disposals do not occur.

+ Three refugee camps in Thailand close this month after return of 150,000 Cambodians, according to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

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For information media—not an official record

+ World Habitat Day to be observed at Headquarters on Monday, 5 October, with awards presented for efforts to improve housing conditions worldwide.

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The Security Council decided tonight that "all States in which there are funds of the Government of Iraq....shall cause the transfer of those funds, as soon as possible to the escrow account" provided for in previous resolutions of the Council. It also decided that "all States in which there are petroleum or petroleum products owned by the Government of Iraq shall take all feasible steps to purchase or arrange for the sale of such petroleum or petroleum products at fair market value".

The text, adopted by a vote of 14 in favour and one abstention (China), also requested the Secretary-General to transfer to the Compensation Fund, a percentage of the transferred funds, and to use the remainder of funds for the costs of United Nations activities concerning the elimination of weapons of mass destruction, the provision of humanitarian relief in Iraq, and other United Nations operations.

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Two rounds of intensive technical discussions between the United Nations and Iraq concerning the humanitarian programme for northern Iraq ended yesterday at Headquarters, according to a United Nations official today.

During the discussions, which also included the extension of the Memorandum of Understanding, the Iraqi side sought and received clarification on several aspects of the winther plan for northern Iraq. On the Memorandum, a number of unresolved issues were taken up and new proposals put forward. Participants in the discussions were Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Eliasson, and the Foreign Minister of Iraq, as well as representatives of United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP).

In related news, a donor meeting was convened by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs in Geneva yesterday, 1 October, at which the winter plan was presented. It was emphasized that the United Nations' ability to respond to the humanitarian needs in northern Iraq will depend on timely and generous donor support.

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Opening the General Assembly's continuing debate this morning the Prime Minister of Lesotho, Major General Elias Phisoana Ramaema, told the Assembly that arrangements were very advanced towards holding the first genuine democratic elections since Lesotho attained independence in 1966.

The military, which assumed power in 1986 to restore peace, to foster national reconciliation, and to set in motion arrangements for a return to

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democratic rule, would not be a contestant in the forthcoming election, he noted. Its primary role would be to ensure that the election is free and fair. To achieve maximum transparency, several countries as well as international organizations had already agreed to send observer missions to witness the process.

Mr. Ramaema went on to say that the stability of the sub-region remained a resource of concern. South Africa continued to be in a grip of violence. Lesotho urged the South African Government, the liberation movements and all other democratic forces to continue the process of negotiations leading to the creation of a new and democratic South Africa.

The Arab Maghreb Union was entering its fourth year and had passed through important stages in the establishment of its structures within the framework of rotation of its chairmanship among its members States, Habib Ben Yahiam, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Tunisia, said this morning. Nevertheless, he warned, some difficulties remained, one of them being the crisis between Libya and certain Western countries. He expressed the hope that a political solution could be found to the dispute, enabling the relaunching of the Arab Maghreb Union and voiding the danger of destabilization in the region.

Speaking about the Middle East situation, the Tunisian Foreign Minister welcomed the bilateral negotiations between the parties concerned, particularly Israel and the Palestinian delegation, and called on Israel to stop its policy of settlements in the occupied Arab territories, policy that constitutes, he said, a major obstacle to peace.

He also emphasized the need to adapt the role of the Security Council to the "new realities of the present international situation", and to reflect on the question of the international community's representation within the Security Council.

Lebanon had "irrevocably" committed itself to the Middle East peace initiative and to the principles and parameters on which it is based, the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lebanon, Souheil Chammas, said. He stressed that the Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Lebanese territories would create "the propitious conditions" for Lebanon to re-establish strength and stability, and to contribute effectively to the peace process. If Israel allowed the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to carry out its task as mandated by the Security Council, the Force could play its important role more effectively and successfully, he said.

The main task that now confronted Lebanon, he continued, was that of rebuilding the infrastructure of basic services and vital sectors of economy. The revitalization of Lebanon's economy constituted an excellent investment for the future, he stressed, calling for foreign financial and technical assistance which was urgently needed, he said, in the order of billions of dollars.

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Rwanda had decided to move from autocracy to democratic pluralism in June 1991, its Prime Minister, Dismas Nsengiyaremye, told the Assembly this afternoon. Sixteen political parties had been registered, five of which had been represented in the government of transition which he had directed since 16 April.

Yet, as in physics, when forces of change were set in motion, forces of inertia resisted them. The transitional government had undertaken institutional changes to guarantee the independence and separation of legislative, executive and judicial branches of the government. The cost of democracy had also included addressing the unjust, costly, fratricidal war which had been carried out since October, 1990. The war had entailed considerable disruption, including the displacement of 350,000 persons, dozens of whom died daily in camps, where hunger and poor hygience prevailed. Some $30 million in aid per year was needed to address that situation, he said. There must be a negotiated solution, he said, as a military solution was evidently impossible.

Mr. Nsengiyaremye appealed to the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to accelerate the repatriation of refugees. His Government wished to reaffirm that the return of Rwandan refugees to their country was an "inalienable right", he added.

The economic situation of the developing nations had not improved, notwithstanding the efforts made at the national level, Jorge Carlos Fonseca, Foreign Minister of Cape Verde, said this afternoon. The precarious economic situation in which these countries found themselves played a negative role in the establishment and consolidation of the democratic institutions and offers fertile ground for the resurgence of conflits.

The problem of underdevelopment was a global concern shared by all those interested in stability and ecological balance of the world, he continued, stressing that Africa was the continent the most affected by drought and desertification. Cape Verde expected that the negotiation of a legal instrument such as the Convention on drought and desertification would be implemented in the course of this session of the General Assembly.

Nguyen Mahn Cam, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, called upon all concerned parties to cooperate in order to ensure the full implementation of the Paris Agreements on Cambodia.

Viet Nam reaffirmed its strict observance and full implementation of provisions, as stipulated by the Agreements. At the same time, he said, Vietnam denounced acts of ostracism and persecution against Vietnamese residents in Cambodia and categorically rejected slanderous allegations against her by those who try to cover up their activities which undermined the Paris Agreement.

Turning to Vietnam's foreign policy, he said that his country was entering into relations with regions with which only rare contacts had been established in the past, such as countries in the South Pacific, the Gulf and

Latin America. The normalization of relations with the United States would benefit peace and stability in South East Asia, he said, insisting that Viet Nam had done whatever possible in cooperating effectively with the United States to settle the question of Americans Missing in Action during the Vietnam war.

Ahmed Hassan Diria, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Tanzania, said Africa had witnessed several, intra-state conflicts in the last two years resulting in heavy human costs and property damage. Neighbouring States had paid heavily through efforts to strengthen their security on common borders, caring for refugees.

Such events, he said, had diverted the attention of Governments from developmental efforts to crisis management related to wars, armed conflicts and insecurity. These conflicts had also thwarted African efforts towards economic recovery and a peaceful transformation to a democratic order.

While encouraging Africa to transform its political and economic systems, the developed nations had a moral and historical duty to assist the continent in pursuing a sustainable development strategy that was people-oriented, said the Foreign Minister, underscoring that such assistance would ensure that Africa pursues genuine development and rids itself of a major cause of internal conflicts.

Mr. Diria also expressed support for United Nations reform, saying the role of the Organization must be reinterpreted to foster emancipation from underdevelopment, injustice, inequalities and political domination. He emphasized the important role of regional organizations such as the Organization of African Unity and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Nicolae Anton Tiu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Moldova, said last night that the conflict in East Moldova was a major obstacle to reform. He added that in that region pro-communist imperialist forces -- including the upper echelon of the old Soviet military -- had initiated a virtual war against the territorial integrity of Moldova.

Destabilization was further complicated by the presence of the Fourtheenth Army, he said. Representatives of the Russian Federation were procrastinating about its withdrawal; they claimed unjustifiably that that Army could play a peace-making role. But they could not act as guarantors of peace, the Moldovan Minister said, and those 4,000 servicemen could be easily withdrawn, given the political will of the Federation of Russia. The United Nations -- given its worldwide authority -- could insist on withdrawal, before the situation degenerated into a regional conflagration.

Cesaire Rabenoro, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Madagascar, told the Assembly yesterday afternoon, "there must be a democratization of international relations", taking into account the need for a fair balance between the General Assembly, the Security Council, the Trusteeship Council,

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the International Court of Justice and the Secretariat. The limitations of the present system had become apparent, and because a global approach was required, it was time to reconsider certain of the Charter's provisions.

Mr Rabenoro went on to say that the members of the Security Council dated back to the situation at the end of the Second World War, but other members States were seeking fairer representation through enlargement of the Council and suppresion of the veto. The 1945 Charter must be revised, and the five permanent members should renounce their veto as part of revisions to be adopted by the sovereign Assembly.

Uruguay's Foreign Minister, Hector Gros Espiell, noted that his country's contribution of personnel to United Nations peace-keeping forces had increased, as he welcomed the Secretary-General's Agenda for Peace in the General Assembly yesterday.

In this day and age, he said, with such issues as the environment, drug trafficking and terrorism being global concerns, it was necessary to create a new concept of sovereignty and to construct a peaceful world based on the protection of the entire international community.

Drug trafficking was now one of the most serious transnational crimes, he said, calling on the United Nations to strengthen its capacity for action via both bilateral and multilateral means in the regional and global realms.

Mr. Gros Espiell also welcomed the resolution of long-standing conflicts in Latin America, including the ruling by the International Court of Justice on the disputes between Honduras and El Salvador, which was accepted by both parties, the arbitration of disputes between Argentina and Chile and between Ecuador and Peru.

Thomas Sanon, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Burkino Faso, said last night that peoples' desires for liberty, national identity and well-being were increasing all over the world. The democratization movement which began in 1987 in his country, had culminated in the adoption by referendum of a new Constitution and the election of the Head of State in 1991; multi-party legislative elections were held earlier this year.

Today, democratic institutions were in place, he said. The transition had proceeded without major crises and led to the social peace that was necessary for development efforts.

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Latvia has asked the United Nations to dispatch a fact-finding mission of human rights experts to that country to examine the situation there.

In a letter to the Secretary-General dated 28 September, Anatolijs Gorbunovs, Chairman of the Latvian Supreme Council, recalled that in his address to the General Assembly, he had indicated Latvia's willingness to have its human rights situation examined by experts of the Commission on Human

Rights. At that time, he had also held discussions about the situation with Mr. Boutros-Ghali.

The Latvian leader said his actions were in response to remarks by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, who had, in his statement to the General Assembly, made reference to "growing discriminatory practices against Russians, Ukranians, Belorussians, Jews and other non-indigenous nationalities in certain new States that emerged on the territory of the former USSR, specifically Estonia and Latvia".

The letter was transmitted to the Secretary-General by Latvian Ambassador Aivars Baumanis.

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Pakistan has asked for the inclusion of an additional item on the agenda of the General Assembly's current session, entitled "Emergency assistance to Pakistan". The request follows rains and floods during the second week of September, which have displaced some 6 million people and have caused extensive damage in the country.

In a letter to the Secretary-General, the Pakistani Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Jamsheed K.A. Marker, said unprecedented rainfall occurred in the northern areas of Pakistan - Azad Jammu and Kashmir - and that the intensity of the rain was the highest ever experienced in that region. The exact number of casualties was not yet known, he said, but the damage -- estimated at more than $1 billion -- was so extensive that restoration work would take several years and would entail a very high cost.

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The General Assembly's Legal Committee (Sixth Committee) yesterday adopted a six-power draft text under which the Assembly would urge States to take all measures to ensure compliance with existing international law applicable to the protection of the environment in times of armed conflicts.

States that had not yet done so, would be urged to consider becoming party to relevant international conventions, and to incorporate the provisions of international law on protection of the environment into their military manuals.

In the discussion that followed, several representatives said that although the Hague Convention of 1907 and the 1949 Geneva Conventions did not specifically mention the environment, they had established universally applicable rules which limited the destruction of non-military targets. Also cited were Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions, which included provisions dealing with dangers to the environment, and the 1977 Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques, which specifically prohibit actions causing long-term and severe environmental damage.

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The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has sent a two-man team to Somalia to investigate reports of possible hazardous waste dumping in that country and to ensure that the planned disposals do not occur.

The UNEP team left on 26 September after the agency received information on incidents concerning toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes in Somalia, involving a number of European firms trading in such wastes. The companies had reportedly entered into contracts with certain Somali authorities for the disposal of wastes. The mission is expected to last for five days.

During yesterday's general debate, the Foreign Minister of Mauritius, Paul Raymond Bérenger called on the international community to "condemn the abominable actions of some private companies based in Europe which were shamefully exploiting situations as exist in Somalia", by dumping toxic waste on its territory. Mr. Béranger said such acts further contributed to the already calamitous situation there, adding that it was regrettable that while the United Nations and regional organizations were trying to resolve such conflicts, others were exploiting them for material gain.

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Three refugee camps in Thailand are closing this month under a programme of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) that has sent back more than 150,000 Cambodians, the Agency said yesterday.

The UNHCR programme is arranging for the return of more than 350,000 Cambodians from seven Thai camps. The aim is to have all the Cambodian refugees home in time to register and vote in elections scheduled for May 1993, under the Paris Peace Accords that ended 12 years of war in Cambodia. At the end of the current monsoon season, UNHCR hopes to increase the monthly rate of returns to about 40,000 in November and December.

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World Habitat Day will be observed at United Nations Headquarters on Monday, 5 October, with the presentation of two sets of awards for achievements aimed at improving housing conditions all over the world. The theme of this year's observance is "Shelter for Sustainable Development".

At a ceremony to begin on Monday in the Economic and Social Council Chamber, Princess Margaret, Countess of Snowden, will present the 1991 World Habitat Awards given by the Building and Social Housing Foundation of the United Kingdom for the establishment of innovative and sustainable projects for human settlements. Specific programmes in Indonesia and in Singapore received these awards.

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The 1992 Habitat Scroll of Honour Awards -- a programme initiated in 1989 by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (HABITAT) -- will also be presented during the ceremony to 15 winners selected for outstanding contributions to the cause of shelter for the poor and the improvement of human settlement conditions around the world.

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